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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

12 August 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

SUBJECT : Answers to Questions Respecting SNIE 57-70:
The Outlook for Cambodia

REFERENCE : Your memorandum to The Director, Central Intelligence
Agency, dated August 11, 1970

"-- On page 6, Combat Effectiveness . . . how large a Cambodian army will be needed to handle the hit-and-run tactics of the present communist forces it faces? i. e. an advantage of 2-1, 10-1, etc."

The rule of thumb derived from the British experience in Malaya was that security forces must outnumber insurgents by 10 to 1. But we think this is misleading. Experience in South Vietnam and Laos shows that the size of government forces is far less important than their leadership, training, equipment, and morale. Thus 65,000 well trained and equipped Cambodians plus a more lightly armed local or regional force of, say, about 100,000 might be sufficient, with US/ARVN air support, to provide reasonable security to the more densely populated areas in the face of a communist threat at the present level.

But all would depend ultimately on how good the Cambodian forces were. Whether Cambodian units would need 6 months, 12 months, or a longer period of seasoning, to "handle" communist units cannot be estimated since we do not know what the quality of training will be, or, indeed, whether any regular training will be possible for most units. Moreover, while the Cambodians are attempting to get themselves organized, the communists may increase their own operating forces, or may severely damage and demoralize Cambodian units and commanders. Thus the question is not really answerable. We do think that a well-trained, well-equipped, and well-led Cambodian army of 65,000 would do a far better job than one of 100,000 or 150,000 which was not in such good shape.

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-- On page 12 the statement is made that 'If the military situation does not soon improve, Lon Nol's support might begin to dissipate and his policies come under open attack.' What are the chances of this happening - 80-90? 80-20?

I am afraid that we cannot add much to what was said in the SNIE, where we gave Lon Nol a somewhat better than even chance of lasting out through 1970 and into 1971. We would observe, however, that psychological factors -- by nature imprecise -- are involved and perhaps controlling. Cambodia has not seen, in the modern era, anything approaching the death and destruction now being visited on its towns, villages, and countryside. Much of this results from defensive actions by the government and its allies. If these efforts and sacrifices fail to have positive results in terms of driving out the North Vietnamese, and lead instead to the deeper penetration of both the South and North Vietnamese into the country, we think there is real danger of a reaction against the Lon Nol government. So far, the rallying force of Khmer nationalism and a certain Asian fatalism have served to promote acceptance of the costs of resistance (including cooperation with Saigon). But we do not know, and have no objective basis for estimating, how long this will to fight will persist. It could conceivably strengthen in the face of adversity; it might also dissolve.

-- There is a seeming discrepancy between the statement on pages 15-16 that there is no way of knowing the depth of peasant commitment to the regime and the statement on page 4 that youths are 'flocking to enlist from all parts of the country and all walks of life.' Are peasant youths among them and if so, does that not tell us something of their commitment to the regime?"

There is indeed a seeming discrepancy, but it probably represents the true situation. As far as we can tell both statements are correct; i.e., many of the young, including peasant youths, have joined the army, and at the same time the older folk back home in the villages manifest little commitment whatever. Evidence on the latter point is very scanty, however, as noted in paragraph 24.

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-- On pages 32 and 33 the statement is made that Hanoi may see an opportunity in Cambodia 'to tie down South Vietnamese (and possibly Thai) forces . . . without excessive cost or risk' to the Communists. I would appreciate a fuller argumentation on the judgment that Hanoi believes its Cambodian operations can be run at 'relatively' low cost and risk (page 38).

In speaking of communist operations in Cambodia at 'relatively low cost and risk' we have in mind, of course, the use of comparatively small units in harassing operations, fighting and withdrawing, avoiding large-scale encounters, spreading widely and thinly over the country rather than concentrating for bigger battles, working politically as well as militarily, and taking plenty of time. This is the sort of thing that the communists have done recently in South Vietnam. Our calculations over several years of analysis indicate that such actions need not be very costly in manpower or supplies, especially with ample food available in Cambodia. Moreover, several new supply lines are open through Laos, and additional manpower is available in North Vietnam to strengthen the forces committed to Cambodia and to maintain minimum force levels in South Vietnam. We suspect also that there are still considerable stocks of arms and ammunition in the old base areas astride the Cambodian-South Vietnamese border. Finally, Hanoi probably doubts, from experience, that its operations could be quickly rendered ineffective by allied ground or air forces. It has shown no sign so far of desisting from them because of either cost or risk -- e. g., the risk that the US might resume bombing North Vietnam or that allied forces might invade southern Laos to cut the supply lines.

In short, we do not yet see the evidence to suggest that Hanoi cannot cope with the difficulties involved and persist in the struggle in Indochina. Thus, we would expect Hanoi to struggle on. The effort involves great strains, but Hanoi is sustained by a belief that the US is not willing to stay the course.

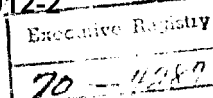
ABBOT SMITH
Director

Smith,

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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August 11, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR

The Director
Central Intelligence Agency

SUBJECT: Questions Generated by SNIE
"The Outlook for Cambodia"

I would like a memorandum addressing the following questions which arose from a reading of the latest SNIE on Cambodia. The responses need not represent an interagency position. An ONE memorandum will suffice. It should be completed, if possible by opening of business 13 August 1970.

-- On page 6, Combat Effectiveness . . . how large a Cambodian army will be needed to handle the hit-and-run tactics of the present communist force it faces? i. e. an advantage of 2-1, 10-1, etc.

-- On page 12 the statement is made that "if the military situation does not soon improve, Lon Nol's support might begin to dissipate and his policies come under open attack." What are the chances of this happening - 50-50?, 80-20?

-- There is a seeming discrepancy between the statement on pages 15-16 that there is no way of knowing the depth of peasant commitment to the regime and the statement on page 4 that youths are "flocking to enlist from all parts of the country and all walks of life." Are peasant youths among them and if so, does that not tell us something of their commitment to the regime?

-- On pages 32 and 33 the statement is made that Hanoi may see an opportunity in Cambodia "to tie down South

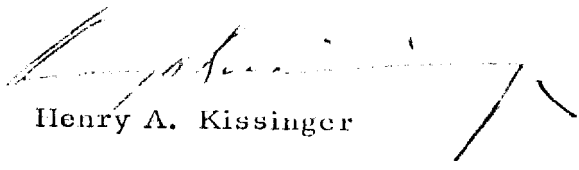
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Vietnamese (and possibly Thai) forces . . . without excessive cost or risk" to the Communists. I would appreciate a fuller argumentation on the judgment that Hanoi believes its Cambodian operations can be run at "relatively " low cost and risk (page 38).



Henry A. Kissinger

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